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Actes del Primer Simposi sobre l'Ensenyament a distància i semipresencial de la Tradumàtica
Traducció i Tecnologies de la Informació i la Comunicació
Bellaterra, 6 i 7 de juny de 2002
http://www.fti.uab.es/tradumatica/papers/

Notes regarding a pedagogical model for the distance learning of tradumática

Ramon Piqué i Huerta
Tradumática Group
ramon.pique@uab.es
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Abstract
The article presents a proposed plan of a pedagogical model for the distance learning of tradumática, based on an educational process that revolves around classes recorded in digital format and synchronous and asynchronous activities overseen by an educational supervisor.

Key words
Tradumática, translation, teaching tradumática, distance learning, pedagogical models.

1. Introduction

The model presented herein has been devised on the basis of the specifications of the content that composes the field of knowledge corresponding to tradumática. Some of these specifications are discussed below, with a view to assisting in the understanding of the model.

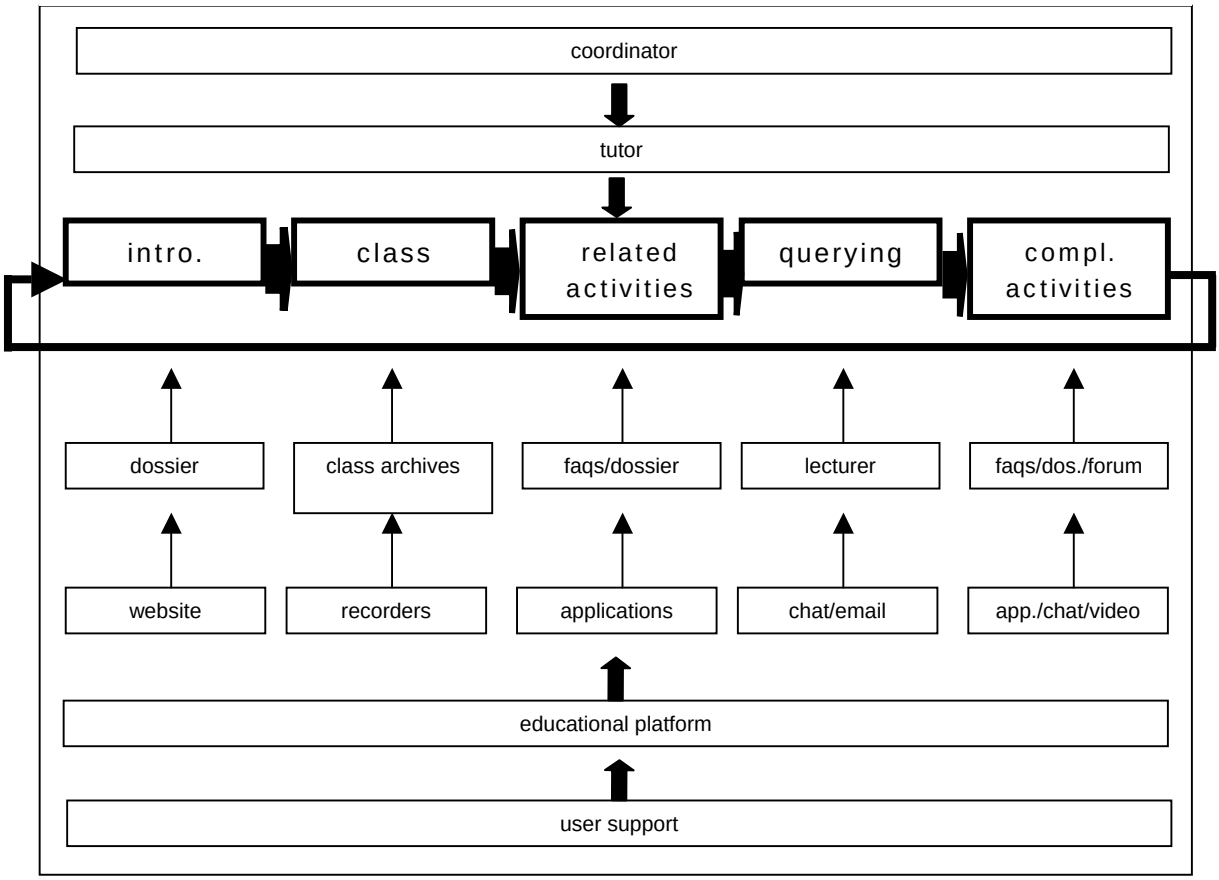
Tradumática is understood to be the study area composed by applying knowledge from the fields of documentation, terminology and IT to translation. References can therefore be made to declarative theoretical knowledge and skills as regards the use of information technologies applied to this field. Consequently, it is also possible to refer to the teaching and learning of the use of related IT tools or of those involved in the translation process.

While one part of the concept consists of learning to use tools, another is based on procedural knowledge. It is for this reason that practical activities take precedence over rote or reasoning-based activities. Accordingly, it is necessary to find out how content can be presented to students and how educational supervisors can carry out assessment and monitoring from a remote location in such a way as to guarantee students' development.

In this respect, it is necessary to consider the tools that multimedia and hypermedia technologies have made available and which may constitute a means of overcoming some of

the challenges that have arisen in the field of teaching tradumática, whether in terms of basic resources or the production of materials.

Plan of the pedagogical model of e-tradumática



2. Learning process

The learning process lies at the heart of the model. The process is divided into five consecutive parts or stages, each of which has a different objective as regards students' learning. In terms of content, a five-stage cycle makes up a session, which could correspond to a topic in a syllabus or be part of a more wide-ranging topic. Each of the stages in question is examined in detail below.

- **Introduction**. This stage sees students being introduced to the content that corresponds to the topic to be covered in a session. This involves emphasising points that may be related to previous topics and attempting to contextualise the new topic as part of a more global whole that facilitates optimal evolution as regards learning. This stage is particularly relevant in terms of the teaching of procedural knowledge, as such knowledge is accumulative by nature; that is the case where IT tools are concerned.
- **Class**. The class is the essence of the learning process. Students' activities and interaction with other stages are related to or dependent upon the work that takes place in classes. Declarative knowledge is presented sequentially and students control the time dedicated thereto. Knowledge of this kind does not require a great deal of on-screen dynamism. Procedural knowledge is imparted through a visual presentation that is pre-determined by the teaching system, similarly to as would be the case with a presence-based class. The idea is to reap the benefits of every communication channel, including the auditory channel,

as this can be extremely useful when drawing up conceptual plans for working processes that involve IT tools.

- **Related activities**. As mentioned previously, practical exercises are of greater relevance than their rote counterparts where the acquisition of knowledge of IT tools is concerned. The concept in question is that of offering students the possibility of resolving situations similar to those examined in classes through different tasks. Such tasks have to be based on scenarios that emulate real situations. Every IT tool is, or should be, designed in accordance with conceptual models. Contextualisation where procedural knowledge is concerned, and thus in the case of IT tools, assists in the devising and fine-tuning of underlying conceptual models.
- **Querying**. Students are able to establish synchronous or asynchronous communication with the session's educational supervisor during this stage, with a view to making any session-related queries that they deem opportune. By virtue of their role as the session's educational supervisor and having assessed the results of the activities carried out by students, lecturers hold information on each student's learning status. The purpose of this stage is to ensure that students have attained the levels specified in the course's objectives. Once this stage has been successfully completed, students are ready to begin a new session. Additionally, the students' educational supervisor can opt to undertake activities geared to complementing aspects that have not been fully grasped.
- **Complementary activities**. These activities, which follow the querying stage, complement those carried out after a class and are not compulsory for all learners. The objective of such activities is for students who have not attained the desired level to be able to undertake exercises and tasks adapted for them on the basis of the deficiencies noted.

3. Learning aids

The kind of materials and types of resources that should be borne in mind when designing teaching activities are described below, in relation to the learning stages set out above.

- **Dossiers**. In generic terms, dossiers are held to consist of written information on a given topic, prepared and formatted in order to cater for a type of specific interaction with students. The dossier must contain the information encompassed and presented in each stage, so that the corresponding objectives can be fulfilled. In the case of the introductory stage, for example, the objective consists of introducing the session, i.e. presenting preliminaries, tying in with any precedents (if necessary) and contextualising the new topic as part of a greater learning-oriented whole. From a functional point of view, a written resource of this kind is useful in every stage that requires complementary information, whether for the purpose of broadening knowledge, synthesis, etc.
- **Class archives**. Class archives refer to the content to be presented to students, the form of which may vary on the basis of the type of knowledge involved (declarative or procedural). In the case in hand, emphasis has been placed on visual presentation that also incorporates the auditory channel, as the goal is to explain or demonstrate how a process is carried out. A class archive must make it possible for students to attend an asynchronous class in such a way that enables them to see the tool that is the subject of the class on the screen and benefit from the lecturer's observations.
- **Frequently-asked questions**. Originating from the world of the internet, the concept of frequently-asked questions (FAQs) is a perfect manner of managing and dealing with common issues and problems that may arise among a group of students, or difficulties detected in similar learning situations. FAQs can be developed on the basis of the most-commonly detected problems, whether in a presence-based environment or in an environment that is fully geared to distance learning. FAQ feedback based on students' pedagogical responses as detected at the different stages of the learning process is also important. Structuring and grouping on the basis of topics and problem types constitute a key aspect as regards students being able to work with FAQs successfully. FAQs are a useful tool for resolving a session's related and complementary activities.
- **Forum**. It is indisputable that learning has a cooperative element, i.e. group learning, learning by sharing with others, learning through emulating others, etc. Collective work is

therefore more thought-provoking and stimulating than working individually. The framework constituted by classes is the appropriate setting for interacting in these terms in a presence-based environment. Modern technology means that dispensing with the pedagogical benefits of cooperative work is not a necessity in a non-presence-based environment. Tools (e.g. forums) that allow for synchronous communication between lecturers and their various students are available to educational supervisors. Lecturers should know how to gear this communicative facility to cooperative work by suggesting activities that focus on that objective, similarly to as occurs in presence-based classes. In functional terms, the idea of a forum can be conceptually transferred to other working environments, as is the case of group work carried out between students who only know each other through a virtual environment.

A more technological approximation appears below, in relation to didactic resources and materials. The aim is to identify the tools and resources available, in order to be able to produce such materials.

- **Web environment**. Bearing in mind that students' working environment is completely digital, the most plausible option is for dossier formats to be compatible with such an environment. This is a reference to web pages, websites, and language extensions such as html, xml, javascript, etc. In addition to web formats, formats such as Word, pdf, ppt, etc. represent examples of information support which are perfectly operative on the internet.
- **Applications for recording tasks**. Class archives should enable students to attend an asynchronous class. This, of course, means a recorded class. Such a recording captures everything that occurs on the screen (it must not be forgotten that the use of tools is being taught) and is supported orally by the lecturer, who makes comments on the process taking place. In the interests of producing quality materials, it must be taken into consideration that each student will be alone with the screen, making it necessary to use specific oratory resources, such as emphasis on relevant points, redundancy, synthesis, recapping, etc. From a technological perspective, it must be borne in mind that the use of standard file formats simplifies the lecturer's task of creating materials and makes usage easier for students. Depending on the technology available, network access speed must also be taken into account, as the files in question tend to be very large. At present, the most feasible solutions entail the use of files that have a high compression rate, such as mpegs. Camtasia[1] is an example of a recording program of the type discussed here, this being the tool used for the first tests on this model at the Facultat de Traducció i d'Interpretació of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, with extremely positive results.
- **Applications being studied**. In order to learn how to use a tool, it is unquestionably necessary for that tool to be available. The aim of this statement of the obvious is to note that students need to have the tool in question installed on their own machines in order to resolve related activities. Designing practical didactic activities that can be carried out using demo versions available to be downloaded from the internet constitutes a compromise solution that does not initially involve the purchase of a licence.
- **Communication tools**. Communication tools can be classified as synchronous or asynchronous, depending on whether or not communication takes place in real time. This distinction is relevant, as each category allows for a different type of interaction. The first category encompasses chat facilities and tools derived therefrom (icq, messengers, irc, etc.), as well as videoconferencing. The second category features email, distribution lists and discussion groups. Both categories are incorporated into the pedagogical model under discussion here.

4. Educational platform

An educational platform is understood to be the technological environment that allows for the configuration of a space, referred to as a virtual campus, which has to provide students with

[1] For further information, see http://www.techsmith.com/download/studiodefault.asp

access to the various activities that make up a course. This campus is where the educational processes of teaching and learning are developed.

The virtual campus is organised on the basis of the concept of a university campus, a metaphor with which students are familiar. Through the simulation of situations that correspond to the academic world, students are provided with access to activities related to the topic being taught, as well as to the same resources as would be found in a university campus, i.e. a library, a bar (an area for unrestricted communication with other students), a classroom (a facility in which classes are given), administration, etc.

The aim is to contextualise the activity of learning in an educational framework to the greatest degree possible, to facilitate cooperative work with other students and lecturers, and to offer the same resources that would be available in a presence-based class. It is for this reason that most virtual campuses also incorporate options inspired by the concept of virtual desks, which provide tools for accessing notes, grade management, calendars, diaries, notice boards, etc.

5. Teaching support

This section describes the ways in which the various educational supervisors are involved in the process of distance learning. The plan of the model features the figures of coordinator, tutor, lecturer and user support. As shown below, these roles encompass different tasks and duties.

- **Coordinator**. This is the person who is responsible for the academic planning of a course. Their involvement in the process is focused on supervising aspects related to establishing objectives and content, as well as the selection of teaching staff for the course in question.
- **Tutor**. This is the person who is responsible for the pedagogical management of a learning process. They must ensure the cohesion of content and methodology, and oversee students' development in terms of learning. This person should have a comprehensive vision of the various topics or modules that may constitute a learning objective.
- **Lecturer**. This is the person who is responsible for producing the different materials that compose a course, i.e. introductory dossiers, the file of frequently-asked questions (FAQs) and the class archive, as well as for designing related and complementary activities, organising forums and making them dynamic, and communication with students as regards issues related to the content of a course.
- **User support**. The user-support role is relevant in cases in which the means of access to a virtual campus becomes a common access point for students. In other words, in cases involving a low network speed or in which adequate equipment is unavailable to students, establishing an area for connecting to the internet in a university or training centre can make it easier for students to access a specific educational offer. The role of user support consists of teaching students who use the virtual campus how the service operates and providing support as regards problems that may arise from the use thereof.

6. Conclusions

By way of a conclusion, it must be emphasised that the suggested model is configured on the basis of the activity of students, as inferred from the learning process described. In turn, it is apparent that the learning process is the focal point to which interaction and the range of human involvement (from lecturers to tutors, and encompassing user support) envisaged is adapted. It is, therefore, a model in which students are in contact with the teaching staff, thus ensuring the evolution of their learning. Although this is a presentation of a distance-learning model, it is necessary to highlight the relevance of monitoring all occurrences in the different stages of a student's learning process.

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